

WHAT'S IN SEASON //

The Kale End of It

Lacinato kale is a star of Italian peasant cuisine.

How a dusty, blistered leaf so reptilian that an alias is dinosaur kale got to be a celebrity is up for conjecture. But a celebrity it is, and has been for quite some time, outlasting those fennel pollen and wood sorrel hipsters.



A staple in Tuscany (another alias is Tuscan kale) for centuries, lacinato is slightly sweeter than prosaic curly kale, and rivals cabbage and Brussels sprouts in stratospheric nutrition. Cucina Povera would be all the more indigent without hearty lacinato-laden ribollita soup and Modena's kale, lentil, and cotechino sausage specialty.

Like myriad Italian imports botanical or material, lacinato has thrived this side of the pond and reaches peak flavor after the first frost. That's right about now, and at **Morello Italian Bistro** (253 Greenwich Ave, Greenwich, CT 203-661-3443; morellobistro.com), Chef Kevin Garcia has turned up the heat beneath his braising pots and sauté pans. "I like to celebrate authentic Italian cuisine," he says, and so his Hudson Valley lacinato shines in a robust ribollita with beans, butternut squash, and fennel; in a braise with onion, tomato, and guanciale accompanying pan-seared halibut; and channels Modena with tubes of paccheri pasta, lentils, and cotechino. "Lacinato's earthy flavor and hardy structure are maintained when cooked," Garcia notes. "It stands up to braising really well." That said, it's no slouch sliced raw in his salad of pecorino and lemon.

Not bad for a dusty old dinosaur. In Greenwich and all points beyond, I say long may it roam.

Braised Kale with Guanciale, Onion, and Tomato

Courtesy of Kevin Garcia, Morello Italian Bistro

Serves 4

- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 medium red onion, sliced very thin
- 4 cloves garlic, sliced thin
- 1 cup guanciale (cured pork jowl), sliced thin (pancetta or smoked bacon can be substituted)
- 3 bunches lacinato kale, washed, dried, ribs discarded, chopped into 2-inch pieces
- 1 28-oz can Italian tomatoes in purée (preferably San Marzano)
- ¼ Tbsp crushed red pepperflakes
- Salt (preferably kosher) to taste

In a high-rimmed sauté pan over medium heat, add olive oil until shimmering. Add onion, garlic, and guanciale and cook until onion begins to caramelize and guanciale begins to crisp. Lower heat and add kale to pan, cooking about 3 to 4 minutes, until kale is wilted. Stir in tomatoes with purée. Add pepper flakes and salt, cover pan and cook slowly 20 to 25 minutes over low heat, stirring occasionally. Excellent served with grilled or roasted pork chops, or in pasta with sausage and lentils.

// Diane Weintraub Pohl

COFFEE WITH THE CHEF //

Chef Scott Jagr

The Rose Room
222 E Main St, Mount Kisco
(914-218-3876; roseroomny.com)



Dish I Do Best... is when I just look to see what's in the refrigerator and take those items and make something out of nothing.

Drink of Choice... Beer; with all the different manufacturers and microbreweries, you never get bored.

Favorite Cuisine... Peasant food—the cheaper cuts of meats and scraps of food that are turned into fabulous works of art that have so many layers of flavor.

Culinary Hero... The Galloping Gourmet host Graham Kerr. I would come home from school and watch him, one of the first cooking shows on TV. It's how I became interested in cooking.

If Not a Chef, I'd Be a... cane carver. In my free time, I carve rattling canes with faces of wizards and old men. What is a rattling cane? A cane that has a chain carved at the top and it hangs down and rattles so while walking in the woods, it lets the animals know you're coming so you don't startle them, mainly bears with cubs, moose, et cetera—things that can hurt you. Don't need them much around here, but they're fun to make.

Favorite Place to Dine Out (other than the restaurant I'm at, of course)... Hot dog trucks. I stop at any and all hot dogs stands to try the onions and chili. I miss Jesse Dogs that used to be on Central Avenue—the best onions ever.

I Hate It When a Diner at My Restaurant... talks on a cellphone. It's rude to the people they're dining with and to rest of the dining room.

I Never Cook With... table salt. I always use kosher or sea salt; it makes a difference. People at home should follow this rule and they will see an improvement in their cooking.

Favorite TV Show... Duck Dynasty. It's one the funniest shows ever that can be watched by all ages and praises the loyalty of family and God.

The Strangest Request From a Diner... A raw—yes raw—hamburger on a bun with all the fixings.

Most Famous Person I Ever Cooked For... That would be President Clinton, but the most rewarding would be Joe Torre—just a down-to-earth and pleasant person.

Three People (Living or Dead) I Would Invite to a Dinner Party... Benjamin Franklin, a lover of beer and spirits; Thomas Jefferson, a foodie himself; and Albert Einstein, just to see how his mind worked.

// John Bruno Turiano

Busiest Bar Nights

According to County bars, on these holiday nights Westchesterites don't just walk into a bar—they run.

- Thanksgiving Eve (aka Black Wednesday)
- St. Patrick's Day
- New Year's Eve
- Halloween
- Super Bowl Sunday



// Mackenzie Mennucci